

NewsRelease



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Langley Research Center
Hampton, Virginia 23681-0001

Chris Rink
(757) 864-6786

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THE JOY OF SCIENCE OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL **NASA program aims to inspire Girl Scout leaders and troops**

The Girl Scouts and NASA want to introduce more girls to the joy of science. This is the aim of a five-part "Earth System Workshop Series" from NASA Langley Research Center in Hampton, Va.

Dr. Arlene Levine, Outreach and Education Manager of the NASA Langley Atmospheric Sciences Competency and former Girl Scout, created the lecture series. This week, Levine will lead workshops on her program and deliver the keynote address to a Girl Scout trainers convention in New York, headquarters of the Girl Scouts of the United States of America.

The workshop series focused on different aspects of Earth science studies: atmosphere, oceans, land, life and their interacting effects. Researchers from NASA Langley, NASA Headquarters, the College of William and Mary, and the Virginia Institute of Marine Sciences (VIMS) presented the lectures. The demonstrations were developed by The Virginia Air and Space Center and VIMS.

Levine came up with idea last summer when she began to think about how to get females, a minority in the science fields, interested in science in general, and in particular, Earth system science.

"I was thinking about 'what could I do to interest more girls in atmospheric sciences?'" Levine said. "Not just to become atmospheric scientists but to be better briefed about physical sciences and the world around them. And it suddenly hit me that the Girl Scouts would be a wonderful vehicle."

Levine, who coordinated the program, contacted a receptive Girl Scout Council of Colonial Coast in August 1999 and scheduled the first lecture for the following November. The four subsequent workshops resulted in Girl Scout Earth Day displays at the Virginia Air and Space Museum in Hampton, Va.

By training the leaders, Levine hopes they will be less apprehensive about going into their Girl Scout science curriculum with the girls.

"We did these for the scout leaders rather than for the Girl Scouts themselves," she added. "Because we thought that we would reach more girls by training the leaders rather than training the girls."

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Troop leaders who attended the initial lectures represent more than 16,000 girls from the Girl Scout Council of Colonial Coast of southeastern Virginia and northeastern North Carolina.

Levine hopes the program will continue next year on a local and national level. Video tapes of the programs have been sent to Girl Scout councils in West Virginia, California, Mississippi, and Alabama.

“Having been a Brownie and Girl Scout myself, a million years ago,” Levine recalls, “I understood that there were certain badges and requirements for science, and the environment. My aim was and still is not to make atmospheric scientists out of every Girl Scout, but to make science literate citizens out of each one. And in addition, give them another avenue to discover the joy of science, discovery and research. For some, I hope they will be sufficiently turned on and further pursue this discipline. “

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